Increase in STD/ISD rates

970. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether STD/ISD rates for cell and WLL service providers have been increased drastically by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India;

(b) if so, what are the rates of STD/ISD from cell, cell to WLL and cell to landline and vice versa; and

(c) the likely revenue to be earned on account of this increase?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir. *Vide* its 24th Amendment to Telecommunication Tariff Order, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has forborne on the prescription of STD tariffs, subject to a ceiling of Rs. 8.40 per minute. TRAI has also forborne completely on the prescription of ISD tariffs.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Withdrawal of 'Rural' status

971. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Telecom Department has withdrawn 'Rural' status for many suburban pockets solely on the basis of census figures of 2001;

(b) whether these pockets/villages still retain the rural characteristics and are still classified as 'Rural' in State revenue records; and

(c) what other criteria were considered for upgradation of 'Rural' areas apart from demographic density as recorded by 2001 census?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Rural or Urban status of areas are decided on the basic of latest Census figures. Accordingly, the status in respect of some of the areas have been modified on the basis of 2001 Census.

(b) and (c) No separate criteria of deciding the rural characteristics of villages is laid down by the Telecom Department. Various pockets/villages are classified as 'Rural' as per the list issued by the Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner in accordance with 2001 Census. The Planning Commission has clarified that the Census of India is the nodal agency to identify all areas into Urban and Rural. Instructions have already been issued to categories urban and rural areas as per the latest list of areas available with the Registrar General of India, Census Commission of India or their Regional Offices located in the respective States after 2001 Census.

Post offices in rural areas

972. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Post Offices in the rural areas as on the 1st April, 2003, State-wise, and the average population covered by a Post Office; and

(b) the number of post offices having long distance telephone and telegraph and fax facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) The number of Post Offices in rural areas is 1,39,081 and the average population covered by a Post Office in rural areas is 5,337 (as on 1.4.2003). The State-wise details of the number of post offices, and the average population covered by a Post Office are given in the Statement. (*See* below)

(b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of House.